

2018 BJET EDITORIAL

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We are delighted to take this opportunity to wish our readership, members of the Editorial Board, our International Advisory Board, authors and all our reviewers a Very Happy New Year.

Reflecting on the past year, we are pleased to report that the Impact Factor for *BJET* rose substantially in the past year and currently stands at 2.41. The journal was ranked 22 out of 235 in ISI Journal Citation Reports Ranking in 2016 in the area of Education and Educational Research. A big thank you is due to the authors and expert reviewers who continue to push up the standards of articles, to our Editorial Board and International Advisory Board for their guidance and input, to the Critical Friends who willingly support early career researchers and other authors who need support to bring their manuscripts up to standard, to all our readers who appreciate and cite the journal's content, and to our publisher Wiley for their efficient article processing and invaluable support to our team. The figures show that BJET is certainly a leading journal in the field of educational technology research and is going from strength to strength!

BJET remains remarkably international despite its name. In 2017 16% articles accepted were from authors in the UK, the rest coming from 19 countries, with USA, Australia, Spain and Turkey heading the list. Overall submissions came from over 50 countries. To give you a flavour of the current state of play, in 2017 BJET received over 300 submissions, of which around 12% were ultimately accepted. However, a high proportion of submissions were not of a sufficient standard to send out to reviewers because, for example, their contribution to the field was limited, they were poorly presented or out of scope. The acceptance rate for peer-reviewed manuscripts was approximately 30%. To further support authors, we recently introduced a new decision category of *Reject and Resubmit Before Peer Review*; this enables more articles to be given a chance of publication and allows authors to improve the quality of their manuscripts by addressing the most obvious flaws before they are sent to reviewers. We are also increasing the word length from 6000 words *including* references to 6000 words *excluding* references, from January 1, 2018.

A key issue which is highly pertinent for us as Editors is the ongoing need for more critical and theoretical approaches to research in the area of educational technology. We co-organised an event on this topic in April 2017 at The Open University in Milton Keynes, jointly with the BERA Educational Technology Special Interest Group, led by Christothea Herodotou. Speakers included Professor Jill Jameson, Professor Martin Oliver, Professor Eileen Scanlon, and Dr Sara Hennessy on behalf of the BJET Editorial team. Issues raised included the observation that technology is not neutral, and that participatory design of technology applications needs to be authentic for sustainability. Martin Oliver pointed out that the field of educational technology has been shaped by instrumental concerns, whereas a critical orientation invites other kinds of questions and consideration of the views, interests and power of different groups. He called for researchers to consider “changes to the unit of analysis, from self-contained technology to networks of people and things”. We also “need to bring in people and things that resist our work, as well as those that support it – both in the interests of sustainability and justice”. As Editors we certainly feel that some of the assumptions made by researchers in this field need to be questioned and underpinning concepts problematised far more than at present; this self-critical reflection and reflexivity should be made explicit in articles.

Our team's presentation at the event focused on *Criticality in Reporting EdTech Research* from the journal Editors' perspective. We made a plea for (self-)critical examination of the contribution that research articles can make to the field, for a stronger analytical stance, for demonstrating innovation and application across international contexts, and for more attention to both pedagogy and issues concerning equity and inclusion. In particular research reports need to move away from "victory narratives" that assume technology has a positive "impact" and provide no empirical evidence for the added value of specific technologies. These issues were illustrated through highlighting the messages emerging from the fast-developing field of mobile learning, drawing on a critical systematic review of research into tablet use and learning gains (Hassler, Major & Hennessy, 2015). Methodological limitations of the studies reviewed included lack of controls or baseline measures in intervention studies, lack of detail about the actual technology use, selective reporting, lack of any theory of change, lack of genuine inquiry, limited reflection and evaluation, very short-term studies, and little systematic exploration of theoretical frameworks. Unfortunately these criticisms apply to many aspects of the edtech field, and we hope that awareness of them will continue to be raised.

Looking forward to 2018, we are delighted to inform you that a special issue of the journal on *Collaborative learning enhanced by mobile technologies* edited by Jimmy Jaldemark (Mid-Sweden University), Stefan Hrastinski (Mid-Sweden University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology), Anders D. Olofsson (Mid-Sweden University) and Lena-Maria Öberg (Mid-Sweden University) has recently been published in early view. It can be accessed via the BJET website and will be available in print in 2018 (49:2).

Special Issues offer an important vehicle for bringing topical and critical debates to the fore. For publication in BJET, a special issue should comprise a collection of papers and reflections on specific topics in our rapidly moving field, and take an analytic (not purely descriptive) stance. BJET will continue to publish one Special Issue per year, which may be proposed by authors or invited by the editors. The deadline for the next Special Issue is June 30, 2018.

In 2017 our call for proposals for Special Issues resulted in many interesting proposals. Three stood out and we are pleased that in addition to our annual Special Issue we will be publishing two guest edited Special Sections. *The changing nature of early childhood learning ecologies, experiences and pedagogies in a digital era* is edited by Dr. Lorna Arnott; University of Strathclyde (Convenor, European Early Childhood Education Research Association Digital Childhoods SIG), Dr. Ioanna Palaiologou, University College London and Dr Colette Gray, Stranmillis University College (expected publication September 2018).

The first guest edited Special Section is on *Serious Games, Education and Inclusion for Disabled People*, with editors Dr Marion Hersh, University of Glasgow and Dr Barbara Leporini, ISTI - CNR, Italy (expected publication date July 2018). The second is on *Teachers as Designers of TEL Interventions*, with guest editors Dr. Donatella Persico & Dr. Francesca Pozzi National Research Council (CNR), Institute for Educational Technology (ITD), Italy, and Prof. Peter Goodyear, The University of Sydney (expected publication date November 2018).

Of course, in addition to the guest edited issues and sections which provide a coherent theme for authors and readers, we already have a number of individual articles that we are looking forward to publishing this year. These include papers in the areas of mobile learning, online learning, and body tracking, with issues such as gender, the learning environment and extrinsic motivators being pursued. However, in line with the themes

outlined last year, we would welcome further papers on the role that educational technologies can play in improving opportunities for those who remain marginalised.

For those at an early stage in their career, we have updated our Early Career Toolkit. We are also encouraged to continue our Critical Friend scheme following feedback at the Open University event and author uptake.

If you are one of our expert reviewers, please note that we have updated our guidance to reviewers. We regularly review our Editorial Board and their reviews to make sure BJET maintains and increases its required critical edge.

All that is left to say is that we look forward to working with you in 2018, whether as a reader, author, reviewer or member of one of our boards.

Haßler, B., Major, L., & Hennessy, S. (2015). Tablet use in schools: A critical review of the evidence for learning outcomes. *Journal of Computer-Assisted Learning* 32 (2), 139-156. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12123>